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**ADDRESS**

TO THE

PEOPLE OF BEAUFORT AND COLLETON DISTRICTS,

UPON

THE SUBJECT OF ABOLITION,

BY

**ROBERT BARNWELL RHETT.**

JANUARY 15, 1838.

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## TO THE CITIZENS OF BEAUFORT AND COLLETON DISTRICTS.

FELLOW CITIZENS :

In a private and friendly letter to the editor of the Charleston Mercury, amongst other events accompanying the memorable secession of the southern members from the hall of the House of Representatives, I stated to him, that I had prepared two resolutions, drawn as amendments to the motion of the member from Vermont, whilst he was discussing the institution of slavery in the south, "declaring, that the constitution having failed to protect the south in the peaceable possession and enjoyment of their rights and peculiar institutions, it was expedient that the Union should be dissolved ; and the other, appointing a committee of two members from each State, to report upon the best means of peaceably dissolving it." Many of the newspapers in the Union, have thought proper to pass strictures upon this letter, as you will perceive, by the following extract from the Evening Star, of New York, of the 6th inst. "Has the Charleston Mercury any objections to state who was the member of Congress who wrote the above letter, and who, he declares, was about to propose in Congress to dissolve the Union? The people of that State, and the friends of the south, and of the Union, have a right to know who it is." As I have no private opinions that I am afraid openly to avow ; and have ever recognised the right in the people to know them upon all matters affecting the public interest or honor—of course, I could not hesitate promptly acknowledging the authorship of the letter referred to, and communicating to the public, the resolutions, which I had shown to many of my friends, and was prepared to offer in my seat, and maintain in the Congress of the United States. You will perceive, that writing *currente calamo* to a friend, I did not correctly describe their whole purport. Such as they are, however, the public are welcome to them, in answer to any question or demand touching any right, real or imaginary, in the premises, which any portion of the people of the United States, east, west, north, or south, may be supposed to possess. I am, however, more immediately responsible to you, and I seize the opportunity their publication offers, of addressing you, as your Representative, upon the momentous subjects they involve. Had I presented them in the House, I should have given my reasons at large for presenting them ; and in submitting them now to your consideration, I trust you will bear with me, whilst I submit to you some of the reasons which caused them to exist.

Before entering upon the merits of the resolutions, however, permit me to remark, (what I suppose might be apparent to all,) that I had

no expectation of passing them, or of even taking a vote upon them. They were intended as amendments to a motion, to refer with instructions to report a bill, abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia. I expected them to share the fate, which inevitably awaited the original motion, so soon as the floor could have been obtained, viz: to be laid upon the table. My design in presenting them, was, to place before Congress and the people, what in my opinion, was the true issue upon this great and vital question; and to point out the course of policy by which it should be met by the southern States. The resolutions are as follows:

—“and the constitution of the United States having proved inadequate to protect the southern States in the peaceable enjoyment of their rights and property, it is expedient that the said constitution should be amended, or the Union of the States be dissolved.

“*Resolved*, That a committee of two members from each State in the Union be appointed, to report upon the expediency and practicability of amending the constitution, or the best means of peaceably dissolving the Union.”

These resolutions contain two propositions: first, a fact,—that “the constitution of the United States having proved inadequate to protect the southern States in the *peaceable* enjoyment of their rights and property;”—second, that it is “expedient that the said constitution should be amended, or the Union of the States be dissolved.” The first of these propositions, containing the fact alleged, is, I trust, the only one concerning which, in the minds of reflecting men in the north or south, there can be any difficulty. That the south has a right, under the constitution, to the peaceable enjoyment of her slave institutions, no one will deny; and if the constitution is perverted from the purposes for which it was made, and proves inadequate to protect the southern States from aggression upon this vital institution,—none but an abolitionist, open or secret, in the north, or a traitor in the south, could fail to come to the conclusion, that the constitution ought to be amended, or the Union be dissolved. To acknowledge the right, or to tolerate the act of interference at all with this institution, is to give it up—to abandon it entirely; and, as this must be the consummation of any interference, the sooner it is reached the better. The south, must hold this institution, not amidst alarm and molestation;—but in peace—perfect peace, from the interference or agitation of others; or, I repeat it, she *will*—she *can*—hold it not at all. Let us, then, consider the fact maintained in the first proposition of the resolution:—Has the constitution proved inadequate to protect the southern States in the peaceable enjoyment of their rights and property?

Without going one step further, I might appeal to the circumstances under which the assertion was penned, to substantiate its truth. In a hall, designed for the purposes of deliberation upon the limited subjects contained in the constitution, \**three hundred thousand* petitioners are allowed to enter,

\* Statement of a Convention of Abolitionists in Connecticut.

for the purpose of assailing the institution of slavery in the south. Day after day, and every day in the week, we are denounced in these petitions, as the most atrocious offenders against God and man. But a few days before this juncture, we heard ourselves, and the people we represent, declared to be actuated, as our habitual characteristic, by the spirit of murder and arson. We were taunted with being afraid of truth and light, and trembling for our tottering institutions. Three years before, upon this very floor, in the spirit of concession, (that no collateral issues should be made as to the right of petition and their consideration,) it had been determined to receive these petitions, consider them immediately, and lay them upon the table; but, as in all cases of aggression, the demand rises with the concession; and being endured, becomes sanctified into right; and it was now contended, that these petitions should not only be received, but be treated exactly in the way the petitioners thought proper to require—be referred to a committee from which slaveholders should be excluded, and composed of members, a majority of whom should be favorable to their demands. In other words, that their petitions should be granted. And this most reasonable request, is made upon one branch of these petitions, by the whole delegation of a State. Another State had sent her memorial into the other end of the Capitol, calling upon Congress, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia and the Territories,—to prohibit slaves from passing from one State to another,—and to exclude Texas, on account of her slaves, from the Union: and one of the Representatives of this State, moves in the House, instructions to a select committee which he required, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. The occasion is siezed, to descant upon slavery in the southern States; and to prove, that it is inconsistent with all natural and revealed law; and that those who uphold it, are obnoxious to the wrath and curse of God and man. Now, under these circumstances of wanton aggression and insult, are the people of the south, in this the common hall of deliberation with their confederates, in the *peaceable* enjoyment of their rights and peculiar institutions?

But there are other circumstances, *without* the halls of Congress, under which these resolutions were penned. A large body of citizens, consisting of one hundred and fifty thousand,\* organized into one thousand five hundred societies, increasing at the rate of one a day, with boundless resources and ably conducted presses, and agents, and missionaries, and martyrs, who pant for distinction in this holy cause, as the best proof of their virtue and sanctity, are permitted, in our sister States, to band together for the openly declared purpose of destroying our institutions. Three years ago, I am told, these societies were about three hundred; their numbers about

\* Statement of Mr. Lewis Tappan, in a letter to Mr. Calhoun.

six thousand ; their petitions about ten thousand. Now, they are hundreds of thousands ; control two States ; increasing in all the non-slaveholding States, and feared by all. United together upon but one principle, they throw their weight into the scale amongst the contending parties of the country, without uniting with any, so as to control the majority, and advance the great purpose of their organization. In defiance of the constitution, the Governor of Maine, upon the demand of the Governor of Georgia, has refused to surrender up two fugitives from justice, because the felony committed was carrying off slaves from a southern port. Massachusetts has passed a replevin law, giving to fugitive slaves a trial by jury ; and her supreme court has determined, that a slave who enters Massachusetts, with the assent of his master, shall be free. The press—the mightiest instrument of revolutions in all enlightened and civilized nations—throughout all the northern and middle States, pours forth, unchecked, its abominable libels ; and, by the most artful and passionate appeals, arouses whole masses—and, amongst them, some of the most conscientious spirits in the land—against our institutions. Was the subject of such combination, legislation, and agitation, a mere abstract or constitutional right, like the right of taxation,—we might be content to exercise our rights, and let others pursue their follies, or entertain their opinions. But here is a subject in which passion, and feeling, and religion, are all involved. All the inexperienced emotions of the heart are against us ; all the abstractions concerning human rights can be perverted against us ; all the theories of political dreamers, atheistical utilitarians, self-exalting and self-righteous religionists, who would reform or expunge the bible,—in short, enthusiasts and fanatics of all sorts, are against us. In truth, only those who have had an opportunity of knowing what the negro race really is, and of being practically acquainted with slavery as it exists in the south, behold it with any charity or approbation. Throughout the northern States,—throughout the whole civilized world, the feeling of condemnation of this institution may be said to be universal. Even in our sister States, those who forbear interfering upon this subject from a regard to the constitutional compact or the Union, are abolitionists in principle and feeling. Although they do not approve of the unprincipled course of the abolitionists, they desire and hope to see slavery abolished ; and if they had the power, or lay under the responsibility of its existence, they would destroy it in a day. Hence, they stand passively by and permit us to be assailed, approving of the end, although condemning the means ; and the Union, which was designed to guarantee, or at least not to affect injuriously, our institutions, is perfidiously used for their overthrow. And mark the history of this fanaticism in foreign nations. Born in atheism, and baptized in the blood of revolutionary France, it accomplished its purpose there. In England, it has

sprung up under the guise of religion, and it has accomplished its purpose there. It has never yet failed, and never will fail, in accomplishing its purpose, *where the slaveholder does not control his own destinies*. It is now flaming in the United States, and extending its numbers with a rapidity far surpassing the operation of the gospel itself, in bringing converts to its cause. All efforts hitherto made for its suppression, have only fanned, instead of extinguishing the flame. 'The people in some parts of the country, indignant at their open violation of their constitutional faith, and the principles of the Union, rise up and crush them. The cry of persecution is raised, and new converts crowd their ranks. Congress, in the spirit of conciliation, in the vain hope of reconciling their demands with the powers of the constitution, instead of rejecting, receive and act upon their petitions. The right of petition is said to be infringed, and a sovereign State\* of the confederacy demands that Congress shall rescind the rules by which their agitation is attempted to be suppressed. The spirit of abolition has advanced, and is advancing. It increases by opposition. It triumphs by defeat. Every concession invigorates its powers, and has increased its capacity for evil. In view of these facts and opinions, am I wrong in supposing that the constitution has failed in protecting the south in the *peaceable* enjoyment of their rights and property? Unless systematic interference, agitation, aggression and insult, with respect to our institutions, is peace,—it will be difficult to prove, that the southern States are in the *peaceable* enjoyment of their rights and property. Such a course of deliberate hostility, as has characterized the conduct of the citizens of the northern States towards the south, for the last three years, would justify, by the laws of nations, a declaration of war between independent sovereignties.

If, then, fellow-citizens, the south is no longer in the peaceable enjoyment of her rights and peculiar institutions, under the constitution of the United States, the question arises upon the second proposition in the resolution:—Is it expedient that the constitution should be amended, or the Union be dissolved?

Those, of course, who design using the Union and the constitution for the purpose of destroying the institution of slavery in the south, will recognise no such expediency. With them, the bonds of the Union constitute the cords by which they propose to bind the victim to the altar. With such designs, next to the atrocity of holding slaves, will be the least resistance to the means by which they expect to accomplish their purpose. Traitors, themselves, to the constitution, and every principle of faith or honor which brought us together, they may imagine, that by clamorously accusing others of a want of fidelity to their constitutional engagements, they may conceal

\* Massachusetts.

their own base perfidy towards theirs ; and when they suppose, that we can be frightened into an abandonment of our rights, by the cry of "disunion," they only prove, how soon we despise those whom we have wronged. With those, however, who have any regard for their own rights or the Union, the expediency of one of these alternatives will be easily understood. The evil must be arrested. It is vain, utterly vain to suppose, that the south will submit to the present state of things. Peace we must have, in, or out of the Union. Our first duty is, to endeavor to obtain it consistently with our alliance with our sister States in the confederacy. It has been through the constitution, under the cover of the Union, that our security has been threatened, and our peace disturbed. (To amend the constitution is the most obvious remedy. Make that clear in the constitution, which they (not the abolitionists only, but the northern people generally) affect to consider doubtful. Take away the power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, and in the Territories south of the line established by the Missouri compromise.) Shut the subject of slavery forever out of the halls of Congress, where it has been most faithlessly introduced ; and let our sister States agree to do, what the laws of nations require of every friendly people, restrain their citizens from combining and plotting the overthrow of our institutions. If such amendments are proposed, and adopted by the constitutional majority—the south will have repose, and the Union be perpetuated. But if they are rejected, it will conclusively prove to the south that the Union ought to be dissolved. We can hold no terms of alliance with deliberate, open enemies ; who seize, (or permit their people to seize,) upon the opportunity afforded by a friendly connexion with them for other purposes, to accomplish the overthrow of our institutions ; and when required to disavow the hostility, and cease the aggression,—decline to do either. But I have no doubt such amendments to the constitution, if proposed in time, before the spirit of abolition has infected the public mind, will be adopted. They take nothing from the north, while they are necessary to the south. And when considered, as undoubtedly they will be, as presenting the alternative of a dissolution of the Union, I cannot believe that fanaticism has already so far maddened public opinion as to induce their rejection. The Union with the south, is too valuable to the north, in the estimation of all sober men, to be surrendered for the mere privilege, (which cannot, in fact, be preserved,) of aggressing upon the rights of others. The Union, is their very best guarantee for the continuance of their free institutions. The time is rapidly approaching, when, their population becoming dense, the competition for bread will be intensely increased,—and universal suffrage, will give to those who have no property, the absolute control of the property and legislation of the country. Their history may then grow darker,

and present a new page for the reading of man. They may then learn the truth in all its horrors, that the despotism of numbers may be the most terrible that can scourge a fallen people. In the south, the laborer does not control the destinies of the country. Every white man is a privileged being. Selfishness and honor alike impels him to an alliance with his race; and (whether he possesses property or not) to uphold the institutions, in which, in fact, chiefly exist the property of the country; whilst the very existence of slavery around him, gives him a loftier tone of independence, and a higher estimate of liberty. *Let it be remembered, that no republic has ever yet been long maintained without the institution of slavery.* Nor are these United States, by any means, a clear exception to this great fact. Slavery has not existed, it is true, in the northern States; but these States have been in intimate alliance with the southern States, through whom its salutary influence has been experienced. The south has been, from its origin, the balance-wheel in this confederacy. That tendency to the absorption and concentration of all power in Government, which is the natural tendency of their democracies, has been continually pressing upon the confederacy from the North, and as continually counteracted by the South. Upon what question has the constitution ever proved any barrier to the wishes of the people of the north? If their views had prevailed, what now would have been its situation, with all its special grants construed away into a few general absorbing powers? Alien and sedition laws would have placed the Government above the animadversion of the people. By protecting tariffs, and systems of internal improvements, the whole property of the country would have been under the control of one mighty—central agency, to be collected and disbursed as a sectional majority should require. All those checks and balances, which the selfishness of man renders necessary to freedom in Government, would have been annihilated,—the constitution virtually destroyed—and a simple despotism erected in its stead. The south, on account of her institutions of slavery, has been the sentinel over the constitution; and if the experiment of written constitutions has succeeded amongst us, it has been to her fidelity in guarding the constitution of the United States that this success should be mainly ascribed. But these are speculative benefits, which, however correct, I am aware may be disputed or denied. Let us, then, turn to things indisputable;—the profit and loss account with the northern States, under the fiscal operation of the Union. Look to the protection given to the shipping interest, belonging almost exclusively to the north; a monopoly of the whole coasting trade, and heavy tonnage duties, by which prodigious advantages over the shipping of foreign nations are given, for its encouragement. I will not recur to the vexed question

under the tariff—whether, producing three-fourths of the exports of the Union, the south does not pay three-fourths of the revenue of the Government, collected upon the imports;—but supposing the different sections of the Union to pay the revenue equally,—mark the prodigious benefit resulting to the northern and middle States by the system of indirect, instead of direct, taxation. If the latter system of taxation was adopted, (unquestionably the fairest, upon every principle of justice,) every citizen would have to pay for the support of the Government in proportion to his property. The taxes would not then be laid and raised upon particular articles, by which they are enhanced in price to the consumer, for the benefit of the domestic manufacturer; but the labor of all would be left to find its natural occupation, exposed to competition with the capital and labor of foreign nations. We need no prophecy to tell us, that under such circumstances, the manufacturers of the north would soon have to cease their vocation. But by the system of indirect taxation, laying duties upon our imports, a home market is created for the northern manufacturer throughout the United States. Turn, also, to the expenditures of the Government. For twenty years prior to 1836, there were four hundred and twenty millions of revenue raised from the people of the United States. Of this, one hundred and thirty millions were paid to our national debt, two hundred and ten millions expended in the northern and middle States, and but eighty millions in the southern and western States of the Union. The consequence of the Union, in all its operations, has been, that the northern and middle States have advanced in wealth and power, unparalleled in the history of nations. The Union has been to them, the greatest temporal blessing that God ever bestowed upon any people. Suppose them to be so drunk with fanaticism as to dissolve it,—what would be their situation, at home and abroad? The great carrying trade of the south would be lost. The great importing trade for the south would be lost. The chief market for their manufactures, and with it the great instrument with which they wield their commerce, our agricultural staples, would be lost. They produce nothing that civilized European nations want. In commerce, in manufactures, in navigation, they would be their rivals. Their position, therefore, would be that of opposing interests—of obvious hostility to all those nations; and contention, and war, would be the natural relation which would spring up between them. What, on the contrary, would be the situation of the south, if the Union was dissolved? Peace with all the civilized nations of the globe; for her agricultural productions are necessary for their manufacturing population, whilst their manufactures are necessary for our consumption. A bond of interest, more potent than armies or navies, would secure us peaceful and friendly relations with every civilized and powerful nation in the universe.



Our agricultural productions now constitute the best guarantee to the Union for peace with foreign nations. The south would then, under the influence of free trade, buy cheapest and sell dearest.—But I pause in this painful prospect. When the alternative is presented to the north, of dissolution of the Union, or the suppression of all intervention in our domestic institutions, I cannot doubt her determination. Interest, honor—all the recollections of the past, all the prospects of the future, will plead for the Union, and the South. We have never wronged them. If we have had power in the confederacy, it has never been used in a spirit of sectional selfishness, for the purpose of oppressing others, or advancing our own aggrandizement. Our policy, since the existence of the Union, has been simply defensive. We have insisted upon the constitution as it is. All the advantages which it fairly gives to the north, and they are immense, we have cheerfully accorded. To require more, and to insist upon the right of wantonly disturbing our peculiar institutions, is plainly equivalent to a demand that the Union shall be dissolved; and if, under such circumstances, it shall be dissolved, upon them will be the responsibility of breaking up the most glorious fabric of liberty that the genius of man has ever invented, and casting its scattered fragments upon the wide ocean of new and untried experiments.

I have thus, fellow-citizens, endeavored to show you your true situation, and the remedy, which in my opinion, it requires. If I am mistaken in the signs of the times, I shall mingle my joy with yours, in finding my errors consistent with your security and peace. But admitting that I am not mistaken, and that it is expedient that the constitution should be amended,—in what way shall we best accomplish this end? That it is not easy to amend the constitution, is obvious from the fact, that although the most violent differences and contentions concerning it have arisen since it went into operation, all efforts to amend it have hitherto failed. I do not think the separate action of the States will be sufficiently imposing and authoritative to accomplish this end. If the members of Congress from the southern States would unite in recommending the amendments, they would probably be adopted; for they would be considered as representing the determination of the South; but I have no hope of seeing union amongst them for such a purpose. It is vain, of course, to look to Congress. The only efficient method of attaining this end, appears to me to be by a meeting of the southern States in convention. The voice of such a convention will be heard and respected, and its recommendations adopted. The very fact of its assemblage, would show that we are united and determined upon this great subject; and this is all that is necessary to give us peace. We have only to will our protection, and it will be secured. But

when will such a convention meet? Not until the Presidential question shall be subordinated to this; and our local party differences shall be absorbed in the one great duty of self-preservation. Until then, 'wait!'—will be the cry. 'You are too rash and precipitate, and may endanger the Union. Stop until we can all be united. So long as people merely petition, merely pray, what occasion for alarm? what need for action? Wait until something is done; until Congress acts;' (that is, I suppose, passes a bill to emancipate slaves.) It is very difficult to reconcile this counsel for delay and toleration, with the design of ever acting at all. A man who talks in this way, may think that he will resist some day or other, but it will ever flee before him, like his shadow. Even, in his estimation, the laurel of the victor, will hardly bloom for his brow. Who that knows any thing of human affairs, but must be sensible, that the subject of abolition may be approached in a thousand ways, without direct legislation. By perpetual discussion, agitation, and threats, accompanied with the real or imaginary power to perform, there will be need of no other action than words, to shake the confidence of men in the safety and continuance of the institution of slavery, and its value and existence will be destroyed. These are all the weapons the abolitionist desires to be allowed to use, to accomplish his purpose. When Congress moves, it will be the last act in the drama; and it will be prepared to enforce its legislation. All regard to our rights and the constitution will then be gone, and it will be a question of mere naked, unprincipled power. And we are to wait until the issue is thus presented, before we seek to protect ourselves! Why, even the last poor privilege of the Indian Brahmin, of lighting our own funeral fires, will then be denied us.

There is no one so weak, but he must perceive, that whilst the spirit of abolition in the north is increasing, slavery in the south, in all the frontier States, is decreasing. Look at Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky—once powerful slave States. With the decline of the value of their great staple, tobacco, and the immense demand for slaves in the rich cotton fields of the south, their slaves have left, and are leaving, their soil. It is true, that in these States, in common with the rest of the south, the insolent pretensions and wicked interference of abolitionists have aroused a spirit of resistance, and settled more deeply the determination to maintain, as their undoubted right, the institution of slavery, at every hazard. With them, also, as with us, I understand, the question of slavery, in its moral and religious aspects, has been lately most carefully examined; and the result is, amongst the slaveholders, at least, a thorough conviction, that the institution is sanctioned by christianity and best for the race over whom it prevails. But interest may ac-

accomplish what neither conscience commands, nor power can extort: and, in a few years, these States may only nominally hold slaves. They may be lukewarm upon this subject. But it is for us—for us, whose climate and soil will permit no other laborer to cultivate our plains;—for us, with whom it is a question not of expediency but of existence, personal and national,—sternly and promptly, to place this vital matter at rest. Delay, not only physically but morally, will weaken every day our capacity to redress ourselves. The most delicate sensibilities, will become dull by habitual outrage. The proudest spirit, be broken by insult long tolerated. That high sense of national honor and character, which is the strongest bulwark of a people's liberty, may become wasted and lost under the influence of teasing agitation,—vain, harrassing contention—and insults, and contumely continually endured; and that apathy to the public interest and welfare, which is the sure prelude to a nation's fall, gradually steal over the public mind. Men will then be looking out for chances, and be filled with vain hopes and fears. Instead of relying upon themselves, they will be leaning upon others; until the dread catastrophe comes, and sweeps them shrieking down the rapids. The path of safety and honor is ever the same. To delay demanding our rights, is generally to abandon them.

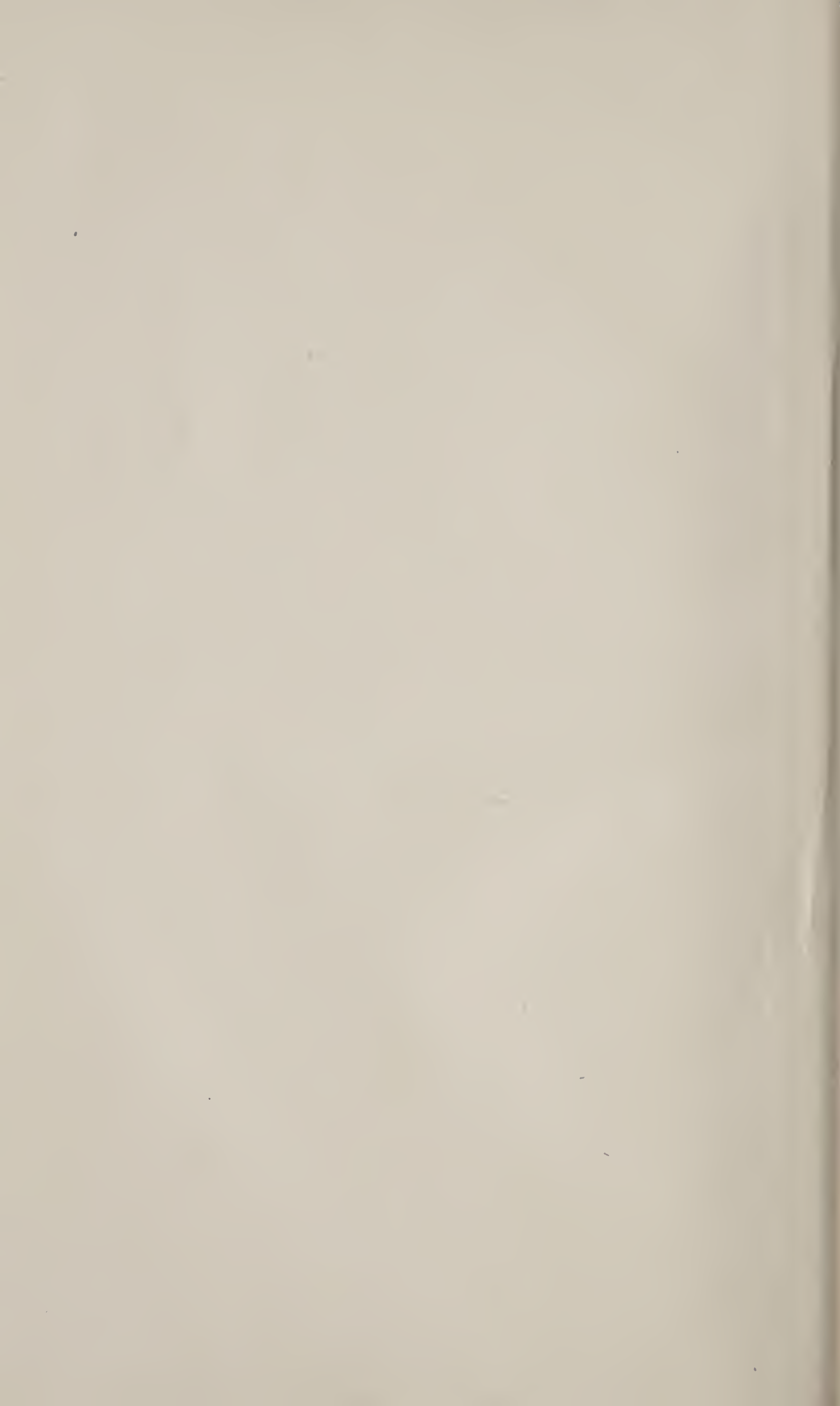
The southern States, are destined to no common fate in the history of nations. They will be amongst the greatest and freest, or the most abject of nations. History presents no such combination for republican liberty, as that which exists amongst them. The African for the laborer,—the Anglo-Saxon for the master and ruler. Both races will be exalted and benefited by the relation. We dare not be passive with the responsibilities which our situation involves. We *must*, we *will* awake,—if not to glory, to infamy; if not for defence, for destruction most miserable; if not to triumph,—to fall, to die, with the epitaph upon our graves, (if graves we are allowed,) written by the pen of philanthropy: 'Here lie the meanest oppressors and cowards who ever polluted the earth with their blood.'

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is well-posed in the sense of Hadamard. The second part is devoted to the construction of the solution. The third part is devoted to the study of the properties of the solution. The fourth part is devoted to the study of the stability of the solution. The fifth part is devoted to the study of the convergence of the solution. The sixth part is devoted to the study of the error of the solution. The seventh part is devoted to the study of the numerical solution. The eighth part is devoted to the study of the application of the solution. The ninth part is devoted to the study of the conclusion. The tenth part is devoted to the study of the references.



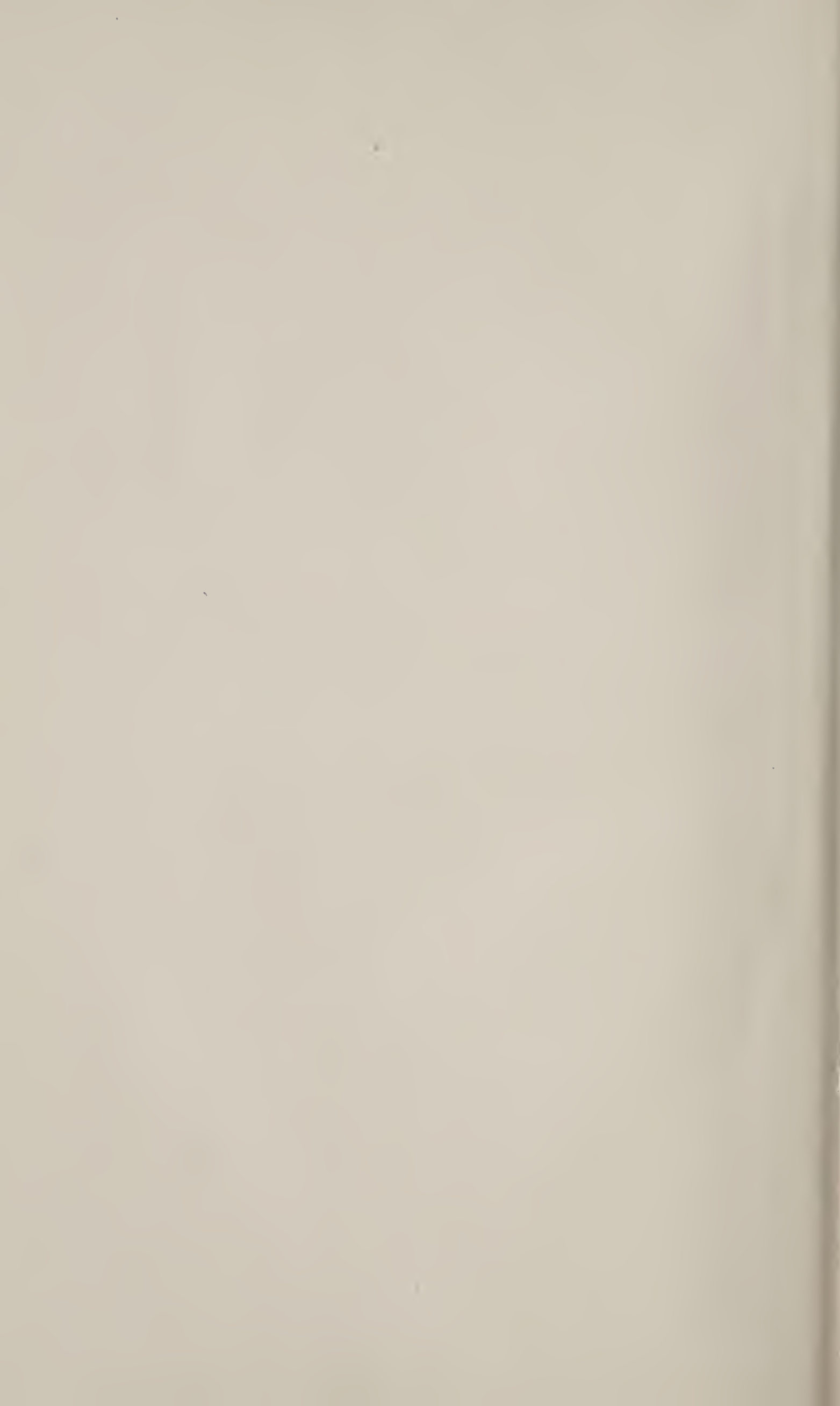














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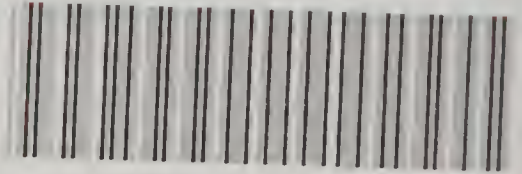
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